

Presenter: Thomas Gergely, Free University of Brussels

Title: “**Antisemitism – A Paranoia?**”

Panel: Sociology and Social Sciences

The phenomenon of the hatred of Jews, the longest uninterrupted abhorrence of human history, is illustrated by sudden leaps and convulsions. Its enfolding is explained by its modes of operation and spirit. The general mechanisms of hatred come up to propelling people, even among the educated and the “civilized”, to swoop down on others with whom, they had eventually been living on good terms until then. These practices are diversely called according to the aspects they tackle: “hatred of the different”; “feelings of inferiority”; destructive tendencies”; “overgeneralization”. When focusing on Jews, these practices are often attached to anti-Jewish traditions, views of Jews as “alien”, “different by religion”; “status weaknesses of a minority”; “attachment to a particularistic identity” and the like. All in all, however, Judeophobia remains a permanent phenomenon that is always threatening as much as essentially incomprehensible. It is as incurable as mental pathologies and it resembles the most to a social paranoia. In our presentation, we will analyse antisemitic behaviour by considering both the mechanisms of hatred involved in antisemitism and the paranoiac dimension of the phenomenon. One should fear that unless the religious, cultural and mental references of many civilizations get transformed, it will be quite impossible to provide a complete cure for the antisemitic pathology. At best, one can hope for remissions.